RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

LEAFLETS
of
POPULAR INFORMATION

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X PENSTEMON PARISHII
(P. centranthifolius X spectabilis)
PARISH'S HYBRID PENSTEMON

Prepared
by
RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
of the
NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Canyon
Orange County
California

× PENSTEMON PARISHII (P. CENTRANTHIFOLIUS × SPECTABILIS)

PARISH'S HYBRID PENSTEMON

Scrophulariaceae — Figwort Family

Slender perennial 2-3 ft. high, arising from a cluster of fibrous roots more or less uniform in size and without a pronounced central tap-root. Herbage glabrous and glaucous; lower leaves oblanceolate, slightly petiolate, 2-4 in. long, entire to obscurely serrate; upper leaves ovate, auriculate-clasping, but distinct, 3 in. long, but becoming smaller higher on the stem, obscurely serrate or entire. Inflorescence a virgate thyrsus 2-3 in. wide and about a foot long, bearing 50-75 flowers. Calyx 3/16 in. long, purplish-green, the 5 ovate sepals distinct to near the base. Corolla magenta, 1 in. long, the tube about 3/8 in. long, expanding into a throat about ½ in. wide, the limb with 5 short lobes forming a slightly 2-lipped flower with two shorter and smaller lobes above and 3 somewhat larger ones below. Stamens 5, inserted on the corolla tube, one a sterile staminode, the others fertile and arranged in two pairs of which the lower pair longer and reaches to the corolla lobes, anther sacs 2, horseshoe shaped to broadly divergent. Ovary superior, 2-celled; style 1, as long as longest stamens. Seed pod a 2-celled membranous capsule splitting at maturity into 4 acutely pointed segments and containing numerous irregular, fertile, black seeds. Blooms from April to June in the wild.

The genus Penstemon (Greek for five stamens, since the genus differs from its close relatives which have only 4 stamens) is essentially American in distribution and contains close to 200 species. They are all perennials of which a few are woody shrubs. Nearly 50 kinds are found in the wild in California where they brighten the spring and summer landscapes from the hottest deserts to the mountain meadows above timberline. Many California species have been introduced into cultivation.

Penstemon Parishii was described in 1882 by Asa Gray, noted American botanist of Harvard University, who had been sent specimens collected near Cucamonga, San Bernardino Co., by Parish Brothers, California botanists who added greatly to the knowledge of California plants. This species is found at scattered points in Southern California from Los Angeles Co. to San Diego Co. The wild plants are usually solitary and are found within the areas where P. spectabilis and centranthifolius grow together. The late Dr. H. M. Hall, California botanist, early (1902) concluded that P. Parishii was a hybrid between the above two spec-

ies, basing his views on morphological characters as well as upon its occurence within the range of the two parents.

We have observed and collected P. Parishii in the wild, but have never propagated it at the Garden from seeds collected from wild plants. Our first cultivated plants of P. Parishii appeared some years ago in our nursery after seeds of P. spectabilis had been harvested in the Garden from a planting in close proximity to plants of P. centranthifolius. A few typical P. Parishii were thus produced by chance hybridization. Since then numerous volunteer plants of P. Parishii have sprung up around the areas where P. spectabilis has been afforded an opportunity to be pollinated by P. centranthifolius.

Seeds collected in the Garden from plants of P. Parishii have yielded some interesting second generation plants. From one such collection we have obtained typical plants of P. centranthifolius, spectabilis and Parishii as well as numerous very lovely forms unlike any of the above. Some of the latter are perhaps more beautiful than the original cross.

In the wild the second generation offspring from plants of P. Parishii have been rarely collected. One such collection approaching P. spectabilis was recently obtained in Riverside Co. (R. S. Woglum in 1939); another from Mt. San Jacinto (M. F. Gilman no. 744) was described as P. spectabilis var. Gilmanii. From a botanical standpoint it is not feasible to provide these various forms with Latin names, but from an horticultural standpoint it may prove convenient to designate some of the best with English names.

Penstemon Parishii can be produced for one's garden by surrounding a plant of P. spectabilis with several plants of P. centranthifolius. Bees will insure some cross pollination, so that seeds gathered from the plants of spectabilis will produce some P. Parishii, which can easily be distinguished while the plants are young. Seeds gathered from the plants of P. Parishii will in turn produce some P. Parishii, spectabilis and centranthifolius as well as many lovely intermediate forms. If the above procedure is followed any careful amateur gardener can derive a great deal of satisfaction in producing his own hybrids.

Species crosses resulting in P. Parishii seem to have arisen with P. centranthifolius as the pollenizer, but, if reversed, pollen from P. spectabilis would probably give the same hybrid.

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Of The Native Plants of California.

Established 1927

In Memory of John W. Bixby

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Purpose: A scientific institution devoted to the growth and study of the native plants of California for their botanical, horticultural and popular features.

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MAIL ADDRESS

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